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FBI FOR DIRECTOR MUELLER FROM AMBASSADOR BEYRL

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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF FBI DIRECTOR MUELLER TO
MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 15-17, 2009

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN BEYRL, REASONS 1.4 (B), (C), (D), AND (F)

¶1. (C) Summary. Director Mueller: Your engagement with Russia's top law enforcement and security service officials is a tangible sign that U.S.-Russian relations are improving markedly after hitting bottom in the summer of 2008. Recent visits by President Obama and Secretary Clinton have demonstrated to the Russians that we take their concerns seriously and have produced more positive momentum in our bilateral ties than I have seen in over a decade. The Bilateral Presidential Commission (BPC) will play a key role in building confidence and giving us regular contact with key elements of the GOR bureaucracy, including the often obstructionist law-enforcement organs. The BPC can strengthen joint efforts to combat terrorism, organized crime and other shared concerns.

¶2. (C) Summary continued. You should harbor no illusions about your counterparts: FSB Director Aleksandr Bortnikov, SVR Director Mikhail Fradkov, and Internal Affairs Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev represent institutions that feel threatened -- ideologically and materially -- by the "reset" in our relations. At the same time, they appreciate the benefits that cooperation with the U.S. provides, not only in achieving their assigned missions, but also in enhancing their country's position internationally. End Summary.

Domestic Political Context

¶3. (C) After almost two years of tandem leadership, President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin govern based on a still-evolving division of labor. Medvedev, the junior partner, has been a steady advocate of modernization -- economic, political and technological. Constitutionally, he has the lead in foreign policy, but makes no major decisions without some form of consultation with Putin, most of which is obscure to the outside world. In addition to governing behind the scenes, Putin has been visible in tackling recent crises such as the conflict with Georgia, gas supply negotiations with Ukraine, and localized unrest due to the economic crisis. Although there is evidence that their closest advisors spar privately over policies and personnel matters, the two leaders appear united and project complete ease with one another in the media. Medvedev has yet to make major changes to the senior staff he inherited from Putin. Putin remains more popular than Medvedev.

Three Skeptics

¶4. (C) Russia's recent economic problems and uncertainty about the future of the Medvedev-Putin "tandem" have reinforced long-standing elite divisions between the

"siloviki" (officials from the security and intelligence services) and the modernizers. Your interlocutors are leading representatives of the siloviki; they are Putin proteges who believe a strong state exercising effective political and economic control is the answer to most problems. They advocate tightening the screws against domestic opposition and their alleged external supporters -- principally the U.S. and its Western allies. The modernizers recognize that Russia's future depends on integration with the world economy and that confronting some of the country's most stubborn problems -- such as corruption -- requires transparency and the impartial application of the law.

¶5. (C) The security services are skeptical about the West's motivations and are the most influential opponents of the engagement agenda. Bortnikov, Fradkov, and Nurgaliyev tend toward a Cold War mentality, which sees the U.S. and its allies intent on undermining Russia -- and they have made public accusations to that effect. None of them is within the "inner circle" of Kremlin decision-making, but instead enjoy the reflected power of their sponsors and allies. According to one expert, Fradkov and Bortnikov share a background in dealing with economic issues -- working behind the scenes to check the influence of Russia's powerful business magnates and advance the interests of their allies. Fradkov, a former prime minister under Putin who allegedly worked for Soviet intelligence in the 1970s in brokering arms sales to India, has a mandate to protect the interests of Russian companies abroad. Fradkov works closely with the powerful state corporations and has ties to the influential First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin. Bortnikov spent his entire career in the FSB working on economic issues, including a stint as head of the FSB Economic Security Service. In that role

Bortnikov worked on the government's campaign against the oligarchs. Many consider Bortnikov as the protege of his predecessor, Nikolay Patrushev, now the Secretary of the Security Council, and also indirectly allied with Sechin. Of the three, only Fradkov has any real experience in foreign relations gained during his tenure as Russian Ambassador to the EU from 2003-2004 and his work in the Ministry of Foreign Trade during the 1990s.

¶6. (C) Nevertheless, there are indications that they value work with other services on specific issues of mutual interest. Perhaps most telling, Nurgaliyev has supported cooperative relationships with his counterparts around the globe, demonstrated by his personal efforts to secure an INTERPOL training center in Moscow, and he has been a good partner for the U.S. in its efforts to protect intellectual property rights. Moreover, Nurgaliyev has openly lamented the culture of corruption with Russia's law enforcement system and has been a strong supporter of Medvedev's well-publicized campaign against corruption.

State Security

¶7. (C) Despite the changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's security services more closely resemble the model of the Czarist-era Okhrana (secret police) than Western law-enforcement institutions. State security remains the services' primary responsibility and all three organizations devote considerable attention and resources to counter-intelligence and domestic intelligence work. While the FSB and MVD nominally share the FBI's responsibilities -- criminal prosecution, organized crime, and counter-terrorism -- they are also fully immersed in Russia's political battles. Political factors determine the services' enthusiasm for pursuing investigations and independent analysts believe individuals within the security services are linked with organized crime.

¶8. (C) Russian security service leaders play a far more open political role than their counterparts in the West. Your three interlocutors accrue political power in the Russian system by using the legal system against political enemies -- turning the courts into weapons of political warfare rather

than independent arbiters. They control large numbers of men and resources -- the MVD alone has more than 190,000 soldiers in its internal security divisions. Despite their similar outlook and background, they are often competitors for influence against each other -- with shadowy conflicts occasionally bubbling to the surface.

Regional Unrest

¶9. (C) After the "color" revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, Russian security services stepped up their efforts against the U.S. and other Western powers, whom they blame for inciting the protests and overthrowing the governments in Tbilisi and Kyiv. Their officers maintain constant vigilance against the U.S. government representatives through active surveillance and they have sought to stifle U.S. humanitarian programs in the North Caucasus. MVD forces harass and intimidate political opposition protests while "investigations" against Western-supported NGOs for trumped up charges (like using pirated software) have hindered the work that those organizations seek to accomplish.

¶10. (C) Concern about potential social unrest associated with the recent economic crisis provided justification for the security services' push earlier this year to eliminate jury trials and to broaden the definition of "treason" to include the organization of protests against the government; the former became a law, while Medvedev withdrew the treason law for revision. In December, the MVD deployed special "OMON" forces in Vladivostok against demonstrators protesting new taxes on imported automobiles, key economic sector in that region. They have shelved plans to reduce the number of MVD internal troops, ostensibly to retain a security force for the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi.

¶11. (C) The marked deterioration of security in the North Caucasus over the past three months has alarmed regional and national leaders. The car bomb that nearly killed Yunus-bek Yevkurov, President of the Republic of Ingushetia, has dampened the initial optimism that Yevkurov could bring ethnic and religious groups together. The continued threat of separatism, extremism, and terrorism -- particularly in the North Caucasus -- is a priority issue for the security

services. Ethnic conflict and social unrest continue to simmer in Ingushetia, Dagestan, and other republics in the troubled Caucasus region. The MVD has more than 15,000 soldiers stationed in Chechnya, an additional regiment in Ingushetia, and has created three "special forces" (spetznaz) counter-terrorism units in Moscow, Smolensk, and Chelyabinsk.

A Challenging Relationship

¶12. (C) While portions of the FSB are working cooperatively with US law enforcement, some sections, particularly those dealing with counterintelligence, are not. Harassing activity against all embassy personnel has spiked in the past several months to a level not seen in many years. Embassy personnel have suffered personally slanderous and falsely prurient attacks in the media. Family members have been the victims of psychologically terrifying assertions that their USG employee spouses had met accidental deaths. Home intrusions have become far more commonplace and bold, and activity against our locally engaged Russian staff continues at a record pace. We have no doubt that this activity originates in the FSB. Counterintelligence challenges remain a hallmark of service at Embassy Moscow. This fact is unlikely to change in the medium term.

¶13. (C) Despite the challenges of working with our Russian counterparts, your visit takes place in the context of strong Kremlin backing and a climate of renewed opportunity. Since your 2004 trip to Russia, the success of joint investigation programs with the MVD and FSB on organized crime, counter-terrorism, and cybercrime has demonstrated the potential gains that a cooperative relationship can provide.

It is premature to say we have reached a turning point in overcoming security service suspicions about U.S. intentions, but the vigor in which the FSB has pursued your visit (including covering the cost of the over flight and airport landing fees) shows a definite thaw after last year's war in Georgia. At a minimum, we can expect the Russian side to welcome your continued advocacy for the Joint FBI-MVD working group on organized crime, efforts to work together to fight cybercrime, and other cooperative projects. We also expect them to be receptive to a renewed invitation for a law enforcement officer to attend the FBI's National Academy at Quantico.

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